

BRIEFING FOR HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

USSR

I. Several new tendencies on Soviet political scene in recent months (last briefed on 22 October--Taiwan straits)

A. Externally

1. Lines of conflict with West have been tightened.
2. "Reduction of tensions" no longer major Soviet foreign policy theme but should take new look at this after/party XXI Congress.

B. Internally

1. Attempt to stabilize and consolidate - check the pace of change.
2. Return to a certain rigor in policy and ideology but no reversion to police state.
3. Khrushchev firmly in control, but maneuvering for succession may be underway. Men to watch are Suslov, Kirichenko, Kosygin.

II. Trends in Foreign Policy

A. Distinct hardening tone.

1. New militancy and assertiveness in Soviet policy.
2. Examples: Berlin, Middle East crises (particularly Iraq) and apparent support of China at Quemoy.

B. Return to harder course deemed desirable by Soviets because of:

1. Danger to Soviet authority in Eastern Europe.

III. In Middle East and Asia, initial break-away of colonial governments led to establishment of parliamentary democracies, mostly neutralist and some tending to the political left.

A. This gave opening for development of strong Communist parties, made it possible for CPs to abandon violent or guerrilla tactics and seek power by parliamentary means (Kerala, Indonesia). *Syria and elsewhere*

1. These parties capitalize on appeal of Soviet methods of forced industrial development to populace with desperately low standard of living.

B. Governments struggling with such problems eagerly accept help wherever they can get it.

1. Movement of Soviet bloc into economic aid field in 1955 skillfully designed to exploit these pressures at minimum cost.

C. Forms of democracy in these countries with uneducated electorate and little administrative experience ^{and plethora of political parties} tend to break down under these strains.

1. So now we see reversal of trend to left in several countries, as military try to block Communists and bring greater efficiency to their governments by taking direct control (Pakistan, Burma, Laos, Thailand).

2. Broadened opportunities because of breakdown in democratic procedures in certain non-bloc countries.
 3. Soviet feeling of enhanced military-economic position relative to West.
 - a. In their view, good prospects for increased bloc economic strength--symptoms of economic crisis in West.
 - b. In their view, growing Communist influence in Asia, Africa, Middle East - decline of Western influence.
- C. Despite more confidence and militant attitude, still wish to avoid nuclear war with USA at present.
1. Despite their progress in ballistic missiles, US retaliatory capability threatens Soviet survival in war.
 2. They believe in achievement of final victory through political struggle.
 3. Continuing possibility of limited war, especially indirect aggression, if they think it can be used without unacceptable risk--this might lead to miscalculation.

III. Trends in Soviet Economy.

- A. Growth rate twice that of US over last decade and in last five years more than three times. Soviet rate expected to continue.
 1. US retains lead in GNP
 - 1957 - Soviet GNP = 45% of US
 - 1965 - Soviet GNP = estimated about 55% of US

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Approved For Release 2004/03/25 : CIA-RDP61-00357R000300200005-9

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Approved For Release 2004/03/25 : CIA-RDP61-00357R000300200005-9